Top Secret

YUGOSLAVIA: Low Military Morale in Kosovo

*Poor morale among the enlisted ranks of the regular military forces serving in Kosovo Province recently has spread to include some junior and mid-level officers.*

Last month a group of officers petitioned the Defense Ministry, urging the federal authorities to seek a political solution to the unrest there. The troops have been in Kosovo since April, and the officers--confronted with a resentful local Albanian population--apparently fear that they will have to maintain order over a prolonged period. Should the unrest in the military spread to the senior officers, Belgrade will come under strong pressure to make political concessions that would relieve the military of some of its responsibilities in the province.

While the large force of regulars in Kosovo has prevented any new large demonstrations, there is still agitation by Albanian nationalists and open resentment of the military among the local Albanian youth. Renewed disturbances are particularly likely to occur when the universities reopen early next month.

The military is one of the strongest unifying institutions in Yugoslavia. It responded unquestioningly in supporting Tito during past periods of internal stress. If dissension within the military over its task in Kosovo becomes more serious, this could raise some doubts in Belgrade about the military's ability to play the same role in the post-Tito era.